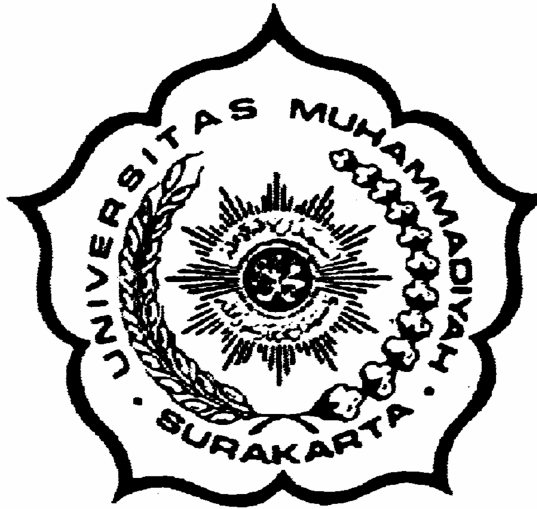


**STELLA'S EXISTENCE REFLECTED IN *30 DAYS OF NIGHT*:  
DARK DAYS MOVIE (2010) DIRECTED BY BEN KETAI:  
AN EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH**



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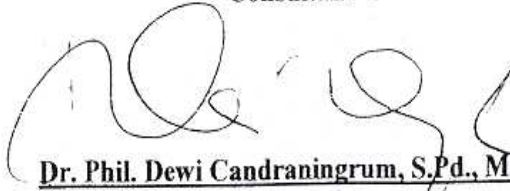
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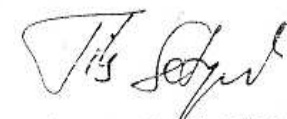
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**ABSTRACT**

*This study is aimed to show Stella's existence in 30 Days of Night: Dark Days movie by using existentialist approach. It is done by establishing two objectives: the first is analyzing the movie based on its structural elements and the second is analyzing the movie based on the Existentialist Approach.*

*This research is descriptive qualitative research. Type of data of the study is text and image taken from two data sources: primary and secondary. The primary data source is the 30 Days of Night: Dark Days movie directed by Ben Ketai released in 2010. While the secondary data sources are other materials taken from books, journals, and internet related to the study. Both data are collected through library research and analyzed by descriptive analysis.*

*The study comes to the following conclusions. First, based on the structural analysis of each elements, it shows that the character and characterization, casting, plot, setting, point of view, theme, mise en scene, cinematography, sound, and editing are related to each other and form a unity. Second, based on the Existentialist analysis reflected in the character and characterization in being, existence before essence, consciousness (cogito), freedom to choose, anxiety, transcendence ego, and nothingness, awareness of the existence of life lead to meaningful goal in human's life.*

**Keywords: Existence, 30 Days of Night: Dark Days, Existentialist Perspective.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

**Background of the Study:** *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie is one of the most popular horror movies ever produced. The screenplay of this movie is adapted from the graphic novel or comic book miniseries with the same name by Steve Niles and Ben Ketai, and adapted for the screen by Niles. Steve Niles was born on June 21, 1965 in United States. He is an American comic book author and novelist, known for works such as *Criminal Macabre*, *Simon Dark*, *Mystery Society* and *Batman: Gotham County Line (2008)*, and *30 Days of Night*. He is credited among other contemporary writers as bringing horror comics back to prominence, authoring such work as *30 Days of Night*, it is sequel, *Dark Days*, and *Criminal Macabre (Dark Horse Comics)* with frequent artist collaborator Ben Templesmith.

*30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie is directed by Ben Ketai. Ben Ketai is an American film director, writer, and producer. He directed and wrote the following Ghost House Pictures productions: the upcoming feature film *30 Days of Night: Dark Days* and the web series *30 Days of Night: Dust to Dust*. The other movie from Ben Ketai such as *30 Days of Night: Blood Trails (2007)*, *Megan (2008)*, *30 Days of Night: Dust to Dust (2008)*, *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)*, and *the Resistance (2010)*.

*30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* is a movie about the Alaskan town of Barrow's population that is decimated by aging of vampires during it is annual month long sunset. Riddled with grief over the death of Stella's husband, bound by nightmares and void of all emotions beyond hate and sorrow, Stella has spent the past months travelling the world, trying to convince others that vampires exist in this world. Constantly feeling as though she is being hunted, Stella is well aware the impending threat in her life, the death of her husband Eben having taken from her ability to feel emotions, leaving her feeling cold and empty inside. Following instructions from a mysterious man named Dane, she eventually ends up Los Angeles.

*30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* is the successful movie and interesting for many people. *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie has four reasons which make the researcher is interested in this movie. The first is the major character of this movie; Stella publishes a book about the events in Barrow. This gets the attention of the Los Angeles vampire population. Learning that there may be a way to bring back Eben, Stella strikes a deal with a vampire named Dane. The two form a brief romantic relationship. Stella exchanges proof of the existence of vampires for her husband's remains, in the hope of bringing him back from the dead. She double crosses

the vampire party, blowing up a large number of them in a house, before successfully resurrecting Eben. She is reunited with her husband who goes for her throat, turning her into a vampire.

The second reason is Stella joins the gang in implementing their anti-vampire agenda for revenge. With nothing remaining to live for, and nothing left to fear, Stella joins their mission and ventures into the uncharted underbelly of Los Angeles where she pushes herself to the most extreme limits to stop the evil from striking again.

The third is the element of plot from the story which takes Stella in the town of Barrow in Alaska, which is known for being in the dark for a complete month each year. In this mind-blowing horror movie, Barrow's sheriff is seen as a person who strives for the welfare of the town's inhabitants. When the residents of Barrow are gearing up for the 30 days of darkness, the town, according to the movie, is attacked by a team of vampires. These creatures have come to Barrow with the only intention of wrecking havoc on the inmates of the town. They start their mission of destruction by breaking all means of communication that the town has with the rest of the world. When they feel that the town has been segregated, they start quenching their thirst for blood. But the sheriff would simply not let this happen, and hence, along with his wife, he sets out on a mission to save as many people as he can.

The last reason is cinematography from this movie having only discovered Steve Niles' work a few months ago; he is rapidly becoming one of the favorite comic book creators. A small Alaskan town was beset by blood thirsty vampires during a month long period of darkness. In this series Stella follows one of the survivors, the wife of the sheriff who sacrificed his life to save the town, as she fights to make the world believe in the menace that destroyed her husband. Niles has an incredible ability to take concepts as old as vampires, zombies and were wolves and find new and intriguing angles to view them through. The major character of this movie tries to convince a skeptical world that vampires are real, that they have worked for centuries to cultivate the belief that they are fiction, and that they are very dangerous.

From those reasons, the writer found the existence from the major character from this movie for life and she has something mission to do. Stella's existence becomes an issue chosen by the researcher in this movie. In the philosophy of existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre views each person as an isolated being who is the subject into an alien universe, and conceives the world as possessing no inherent human truth, value, or meaning. A person's life as it moves from the nothingness from which it comes toward the

nothingness where it must be end, defines an existence which is both anguished and absurd.

Based on the reason the writer will observe *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie by using an existentialist theory by Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre. So the writer constructs the title **STELLA'S EXISTENCE REFLECTED IN 30 DAYS OF NIGHT: DARK DAYS MOVIE (2010) DIRECTED BY BEN KETAI: AN EXISTENTIALIST APPROACH.**

**Problem Statement** of this research is: "How does Stella's existence reflected in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie, the main character of *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie?"

**Limitation of the Study** is analyzing Stella's existence in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie based on Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre theory of existentialism.

**Objective of the Study** is to analyze *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie based on the structural elements of the movie and to describe Stella's existence in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie based on an existentialist approach.

**Literature Review** is conducted by Hanna Hamad, a Massey University with the thesis entitled "*The Gendered Hyper-Visibility of Whiteness in Whiteout (Dominic Sena, 2009) and 30 Days of Night*". The research focuses on critically explores the centrality, visual aesthetic and over determined articulation of discourses of whiteness in the contemporary Hollywood thrillers *Whiteout (Dominic Sena, 2009)* and *30 Days of Night*.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. Descriptive qualitative is a type of research which results the descriptive data in the form of written or oral words from the observed object. The data of this study are image and text in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie by Ben Ketai. Data Source: The primary data source is the film and script of *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie directed by Ben Ketai which is related to the study. The secondary data sources are the books and other sources that support the analysis. The object of this study is *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* directed by Ben Ketai and publishing by Sony Home Pictures Entertainment in 2010. It is analyzed by using an existentialist approach. The method of data collection in this study is note-taking and image-capturing. The researcher views the primary data repeatedly to reach more understanding of source. Next, the writer takes, compares, quotes, and studies others data into some categories and develops them into a good unity. The technique of data analysis in this study is descriptive. It concerns with the

structural elements of the movie, the writer uses an existentialist approach, and draws conclusion.

### **III. EXISTENTIALIST THEORY**

#### **A. The Notion of Existentialism**

Existentialism is known as a branch of philosophy, which focuses on human existence. Existentialism is not understood as an abstract thought, but man's concrete efforts to seek for his meaningful life and to others, therefore existentialism does not invite as a system of thought but in a concrete effort to make human's life useful and respectable by the society. Existentialism, according to McGrath (1997:570), has a meaning as a movement which emphasizes on the subjectivity of individual existence. Webster (1995: 397) further gives the definition that the term existentialism is "a family of philosophies devoted to an interpretation of human existence in the world that stress its concreteness and its problematic character". In a short, Existentialism is comprehended as a philosophical movement which is giving emphasize on the individual existence, freedom and choice. As a result, the term existentialism could not be only seen from one side but it needs more exploration to get more understanding to know the notion precisely because existentialism is not only a theory but also a movement based on reason of human mind over the circumstances human face.

#### **B. Sartre's Existentialism**

##### **1. Being**

Sartre distinguished being into two, namely being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Being in-itself has a subject in the thing which has no consciousness, and then being-for-itself has a subject in the human which has consciousness to decide their existence and also their action for signing of them that they exist in the world.

##### **2. Existence before Essence**

Sartre explained that "human life is understandable in terms of an individual man's existence, his particular experience of life. Further it is explained, "A man lives means that he has an existence rather than a man is which means he has being or essence". Man is being by his conscious as his own self and as like that he can not be changed.

##### **3. Self- Consciousness (Cogito)**

Conscious is intentional, naturally course to the world. As Sartre formulated: conscious (as if) himself exists (as if) conscious a

things. Conscious is self consciousness (Bertens, 1996: 91). But he mostly stresses his study on human consciousness. Since only human being has self-consciousness, it cannot be divided that human being becomes the focus of his study.

4. Freedom to Choose

Man has freedom to do, to choose, and becomes everything he wants. As he cannot live by himself, he also cannot neglect others. It can be concluded that his freedom takes him to consequential responsibility. Its responsibility is that he chooses what the best is for him and also for others.

5. Anxiety

That is anxiety when the people have chosen a choice in their life, completely they are conscious, they do just not choose what they are being, but also all at once the legislator who decides for humans all human unity. In this situation, he cannot run from deep completely responsibility's feeling.

6. Transcendence of Ego

Transcendence of Ego is such kind of tendencies for humans to do more helpful for their society as hero for the example a man has tendencies to help the old man across the street. Actually he has the transcendence of Ego. His ego of willing help is more important than the ego in himself.

7. Nothingness

Nothingness appears in existentialism, as the placeholder of the possibility. The awareness of anything in the world that is not the own existence (which by the way, cannot be held in consciousness without being civilized) is an awareness of nothingness, that is, what he, this existence is not and in some cases someone could become.

## **IV. RESEARCH FINDING**

### **A. Structural Analysis**

The movie *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie is adapted from the graphic novel or comic book miniseries written by Steve Niles and Ben Ketai with the same title. Ben Ketai is the director of the movie *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)*. The theme of the movie is humans need to search the meaning of their life in order to understand and know their existence. In this movie Ben Ketai tries to explore how Stella's existence for revenge after her husband died.



The major characters in this movie are Stella Oleson, Lilith, and Paul. Stella in this movie is acted by Kiele Sanchez, she acted a strong woman; she has high emotional with something that can make she remember the incident in the town of Barrow, Alaskan. Lilith is acted by Mia Kirshner; she is known as the queen of the vampires and the one that keeps them organised, she is killed by being decapitated by Stella. She was all vampires' powers. Paul was acted by Rhys Coiro; Paul was Stella's friend that Stella, Paul was sent by Dane to ask Stella in order to hunt down the vampire queen Lilith. Paul lost his daughter for three years ago, in Washington.

The minor characters are Dane, Agent Norris, Amber, and Todd. Dane acted by Ben Cotton; he is a vampire that helps Stella, Paul, Todd, and Amber to hunt down the vampire queen Lilith. He thinks due to a superficially inflicted wound he has maintained a grasp of humanity, only drinking blood from packaged hospital stocks he keeps. Agent Norris is acted by Troy Ruptash; Agent Norris was the agent as the Lilith's messenger to care for Stella. Amber is acted by Diora Baird; Amber was Stella's friend. Amber lost her mother and father, right off her farm outside of Tulsa. Todd is acted by Harold Perrineau; Todd was Stella's friend. Todd lost his fiancée in New Orleans, middle of the city, and no one believes him.

*In 30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie, researcher can see that Stella joins the gang in implementing their anti-vampire agenda for revenge. With nothing remaining to live for, and nothing left to fear, Stella joins the mission and ventures into the uncharted underbelly of Los Angeles where she pushes herself to the most extreme limits to stop the evil from striking again.

The whole setting of place of this movie is in the Barrow Alaskan and Los Angeles, but there are some places where the movie takes place, such like: Stella's Apartment in America, Dane's Place, Lilith's Shelter Place in Los Angeles, Ship in Arctic Circle. In the beginning this movie takes place in Barrow town, Alaskan where Stella lives with her husband. In that place the accident begins, where her husband died because of the vampire. The setting of time of the movie is in the early of twenty-first century.

The point of view in this movie is third person with non- omniscient characters. Ben Ketai uses army boats as the place for companionship the vampire queen with the followers. And in that place the battle of Stella and Lilith begins the movie more attractive in order to make the audience enjoy the movie itself.

The stuctural elements of the movie also support the story of this movie. Ben Ketai has found the character for this movie as close as possible to the character in the play by casting process. He selected the best actor and actress such as: Kiele Sanchez as Stello Oleson, Rhys Coiro as Paul, Diora

Baird as Amber, Mia Kirshner as Lilith, Harold Perrineau as Todd, Ben Cotton as Dane, Troy Ruptash as Agent Norris, and Katie Keating as Jennifer. The aspect of *Mise en scene* also performed here such as costume by Jane Holland, she manages the proper costumes in order to make good performances with natural style in this movie. The coordinator of special make up effects of the actors and actress is by Gino Avecedo who can manage the make up for actors and actresses so natural based on their characters in the movie. The other aspects are lighting and sound. The lighting in this movie gives strong impression to build the situations. The quality of the sound in this movie is Dolby Stereo. Sounds in this movie are by Eric Lalicata (re-recording mixer), Sean Gray (sound effects editor), Eryne Prine (sound effects editor), Jaclyn Newman (music editor), Ryan Gegenheimer (sound designer), Eric Lalicata (supervising sound editor).

Finally, from this movie researcher can see that humans need to search the meaning of their life in order to understand and know their existence, researcher as a human have conflict of life and tries to overcome it. Usually, it occurs when people choose their life. People should be responsible for their choice between bad life and good life to have a meaning of life suitable with their final decision. Sometimes people are not always successful in choosing their choice in overcoming the conflicts and also humans need to do sacrifice for other people although they hurt or even die.

## **B. Existentialist Analysis**

The analysis of the major character in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days* (2010) movie by Ben Ketai shows the meaning of life and existence of person for her life. The major characters give the important part of construction the meaning of her life which is in this movie based on the Sartre's existentialism.

Through *30 Days of Night: Dark Days* (2010) movie, Ben Ketai shows the major character Stella in this movie gives a good motivation to humans that life has meaningful and goal. Human being is the master who is created by in perfect condition more than another creature. Stella can reach her goal to find her meaning of life to revenge because of the death of her husband in the end of the movie. She has awareness to do in every situation. It can be seen in this movie by defeating the vampire which has more power. It has many differences from the human being but it has some simple weaknesses, so the vampire can be defeated. This is the motivation for the researcher to keep doing the best for researcher's activities in reaching the goal or find meaning of life like Stella action. Although in the beginning of the movie Stella shows her anxiety about what her action, but by the journey and her action to defeat the

vampire, finally Stella can be aware and go for hunting down the vampire queen Lilith.

Through *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie Ben Ketai shows the existence of humans is different based on their choice, act, being, which determine the existence of people. Humans have to choose the goal of their life, that is started on their being which has sign an action that show their goal in life. These have requirement to define their existence that is consciousness, humans need consciousness to reach their goal. It implies at the major characters of their own existence to reach the change. All of the activities based on what is the goal in their life. They are conscious to reach and define themselves as their goal. Stella is in full conscious when she is in her existence. She has to be free to choose. This is evidence that every human being also exists. She makes her own existence by her freedom to choose in her life which indicates that the people have to be free to choose. Nothing influences her to choose. Ben Ketai shows the existence of humans by giving the choices in her life. Every choice is based on their goal in their life; the requirement of the choice must be freedom to choose, and no one who influences their choice. Humans must be aware and also have consciousness to choose. This phenomena is always occurring in human existence, human being will face the condition obliging it to chosen one of the choice, this phenomena is called anxiety.

Through *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie, Ben Ketai shows the existence of human sometimes out of her ego. She emphasizes her ego to do something which is useful for humans and society level that called transcendence of ego. Everyone has an ego. They can improve their ego in the high level on their mind to help others, the transcendence ego for every person has differential level, for example in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie as the major characters, Stella, Paul, and Lilith can reach society level transcendence of ego by doing everything which makes them save the condition and the existence of the society. Ben Ketai shows the existence of human being will finish when they have been dead. Humans start their existence when they have reached full consciousness for existence. If they are not in consciousness, it means they are in the nothingness condition, for example children which do not know their existence. They are not being able to choose, so the existence of human starts with nothingness at the first time.

Finally Ben Ketai builds a meaningful story which motivates the audience of *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie by the Stella's existence. Stella reveranges because of the death of her husband and she wants to save her citizen from the vampire's threat. She chooses all choices which relate the choice of the people to reach her purposes. At last, she can prove to disembody the vampire queen Lilith. The aspect of existentialism occurred in

this movie; being, existence before essence, freedom to choose, anxiety, transcendence of ego, and finally nothingness build in this movie. It represents that there are existentialist aspects in this movie.

## V. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, the researcher would like to draw some conclusions as follows:

Firstly, based on the structural analysis, it is evident that in the movie, Ben Ketai wants to convey a moral message that “the awareness of life meaning leads to meaningful action and meaning purpose”. It can be shown the character of Stella Oleson that succeeded to get much impression for a horror movie based on comic books miniseries; the continually plot from the beginning, the middle, and the end; the point of view have been done in all ways and precisely appropriate applied in the story in the most setting of place; then the visualization from *mise-en-scene*, cinematography, editing, and the other technical elements have the unity and successful relate to one another then finally formulated into good quality of a movie.

Secondly, based on the Existentialist analysis *30 Days of Night: Dark Days (2010)* movie, the movie has the existentialist aspect that builds in the story and character in this movie. Existentialism reflects individual context in expressing meaning of life through consciousness, freedom, anxiety, transcendence of ego. All of these aspects become parts of existentialism philosophy.

The existence of people starts with nothingness that a humans being is in blank existence, she starts her existence by being which has sign by action of human, the second, existence of human can be shown by the existence before essence, it is a process of becoming by human to define herself as well as her will. The third is based on consciousness, human can define herself in the process of becoming when she is aware about herself, her existence and also her choice, consciousness should exist in the human existence because it is becoming requirement the existence of human.

The next requirement for human to exist that she has to have freedom to choose, no one influence her existence to choose, it is the process of becoming by people to define herself as she want. The fifth is the anxiety, it is the condition of the humans that they should choose the choice, when they have to choose one choice they feel uncomfortable about their choice which does not make sense, she scares if she chooses her choice, this condition is called anxiety condition of people, and the last is transcendence of ego phenomena, actually humans have a differential level of transcendence of ego, in this

phenomena people do out of her ego level, all of those are the aspect which occurs in *30 Days of Night: Dark Days* existentialist's analysis.

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